

*The content which follows is a transcript of the Practical Amateur Radio Podcast hosted by Jerry Taylor, KDOBİK. This monthly version of PARP is typically released the last week of each month.*

The Practical Amateur Radio Podcast – Episode number 57.

From the ham shack of KDOBİK, located in Colorful Colorado, this is the Practical Amateur Radio Podcast.

This is show number 56, volume number 5 with a release date of July 25 , 2012.

Hello everyone. My name is Jerry Taylor; my amateur radio call sign is KDOBİK and welcome to the Practical Amateur Radio Podcast...Creating Elmers One Podcast at a time.

This podcast is about amateur radio, also known as ham radio. For the past 5 seasons, this podcast has helped entertain, encourage, educate and inspire many individuals to get their license and has helped countless already licensed amateurs get more from the hobby.

If you are interested in the hobby and service of amateur radio, already currently studying for your exam or have been in ham radio for years...I truly hope this podcast will help you.

If it has helped you, I hope you will continue to listen and I also hope you'll tell others. Also, in keeping with our Creating Elmers one podcast at a time philosophy, if you learn something from our podcasts....please share that knowledge with others.

As we all said goodbye to June and hello to July, we officially transitioned beyond the half-way point of 2012. It is hard to believe and before you know it the year will be done.

If you remember back in episode 51 which was released in January...Episode 51 was my annual New Years Resolution episode. Anyway, I had several listeners email or tweet me what their planned New Years Resolutions were.

One was centered around building a portable emergency communication setup for HF. Another was to become more active in amateur radio. A third was to get their local scout group together for JOTA or Jamboree On the Air.

One included improving his CW skills and finally...one had listed upgrading to extra class as his New Years Resolution for 2012.

Let's face it...life gets busy. What we set out to accomplish early in the year might just change by the time we finish the year. I'll also be the first to tell you that time does seem to slip away and even with every good intention, you wake up and realize the year has slipped by and you just couldn't get something done.

That exact scenario happened to me with my own upgrade to extra. However, last year (about this time last year) I began to re-focus my study efforts, got myself organized and got it done.

While half of 2012 is gone....the good news is we still have plenty of time to get the things done that we may have set out to accomplish.

This is certainly true for the individuals who sent me emails and tweets last December. There is certainly still time to build that emergency communication setup for HF. There is still time to get more active on the bands. There is still time to plan for and get the scouts ready for JOTA 2012 (reminder...this takes place October 20 and 21.

There is also still time to brush up on those CW skills and YES.....YES, there is still so much more time to get prepared for and pass the extra exam.

As for me, you all know that I started the New Year with a plan to have at least one QSO per day, each day in 2012. I'm proud to say that I'm still on track. I've successfully had at least one QSO per day, some days many more....but each day at least one.

Some of my daily QSO's are a quick JT65 QSO just after dinner, others have certainly included special event stations and contests. Even others have been from my Summits On The Air activations.

I'll admit, there have been evenings when I would get home between 9 and 10 PM from a club meeting or conducting a SOTA presentation to another amateur radio club....and almost have to force myself down to the shack to fire up the HF rig and get on the air.

But on a few of those occasions, my effort has been rewarded with working a new DX entity or working one of my listeners of PARP or a Twitter follower.

There is a certain kind of magic which occurs each time I sit down in my nice comfy chair, down in my basement ham shack and reach over and switch on my HF rig. For me....this magic is the fulfillment of a child-hood dream to get my ham radio license. To talk on the radio just like my Uncle Dave.

I may not attempt a QSO a day for 2013. My wife and I plan to travel to Europe for a few weeks in the summer and just the sheer effort of traveling would perhaps cause me to miss a day or two. Plus, my wife and I tend to really maximize our time in Europe both visiting with family and taking in so many of the sights.

Of course, if any of you have any contacts with British Airways and could setup an opportunity for KDOBİK to operate aeronautical mobile, that would certainly be fun.

Regardless whether I attempt another QSO a day goal in 2013, I have learned a valuable lesson from my 2012 experience and that is the magic of ham radio is truly amazing and the things that can be done and all the things you can learn and experience through our wonderful hobby....occurs 365 days a year.

Well in the case of 2012, that is 366 days a year.

While I had five fellow hams share their 2012 New Years Resolutions and I shared mine with you, what about the rest of you? How are you doing on accomplishing the goals you set out to accomplish? Are you done? Have you started?

Don't give up....there truly is plenty of time and NOW is a great time to start.

Now something else that I talked about in that January episode was preparedness. As I stated then, and I'll re-state now....I'm really not trying to scare you or freak you out. To re-affirm what I said six months ago....while there has been so much emphasis placed on a particular date this December....I believe in what Matthew said and I'll just leave it at that.

But as I said then, our world is changing. Just in recent weeks many were without electricity for many days along the east coast. Here in my neck of the woods, thousands have had to evacuate from their homes due to the risk of fire and so many lost everything with a few losing their lives.

We've also seen an increase in solar activity and some experts say it is only a matter of time before a major solar storm takes out some of our electrical grid and communication capabilities.

Are you Ready?

Pause.....

Are We Ready??? I say WE, because I'm struggling to get caught up myself with regards to mine and my families preparedness status.

In recent weeks, I've been reading and studying various topics on the subject of preparedness. I've signed up to a few websites and forums to try to gain an understanding of what others are doing to be prepared.

While I've learned a lot....I'm no expert. However, then one thing I have learned is the term "Be Prepared" certainly has a much different meaning than it did from my youth in the Boy Scouts.

Now all of these websites and forums do slightly differ from one to the next. Of course, their main focus is on preparedness or prepping. Some are real hard-core on the end of the world scenarios, others are more focused on homesteading and living off the land.

Of course, depending on where the target audience resides...the topics around arming oneself, the right to bear arms and self defense will of course vary.

I'd say the vast majority of websites I've visited and researched...all will have a section or topics dedicated to communications.

It's not surprising that the majority of communication topics tend to feature or suggest amateur radio or ham radio as the appropriate choice. We all know...."When All Else Fails" ....there's amateur radio.

Before I proceed, allow me to read an email from a listener.

Dear Jerry,

Like many, I've caught the prepper bug. As I've heard you discuss on PARP, I also believe December 21st will be just another day and we'll all be around to celebrate Christmas and the New Year. However, I'm

finding it harder and harder to ignore not only the state of our country....but also the state of the entire world.

I've been reading as much as I can and have been assembling all the supplies that I can. I've adapted my every day carry items, I've assembled a "Get Home Bag" and a Bug out Bag. The one area that really scares me is communications....or should I say lack of communications should something really bad happen.

Both my wife and I have cell phones. But I know these may not work. I've looked into the citizens band and family radio service equipment as well as amateur radio. I keep coming back to amateur radio as this is the solution I feel will work best in a crisis type situation.

I found out about your podcast and have been listening to some of your older episodes. I will apologize in advance if you've already covered these areas...but would like to ask a few questions if I may.

First, I understand you need to be licensed in order to transmit on the amateur bands...but do you need to first be licensed before purchasing equipment? Also, in a crisis situation...would I or my wife need to be licensed to operate our radios? I feel it might be difficult to convince my wife to get her license.

Second, I'm sure you get asked this question a lot, but what would be a good first radio to purchase? Do you have any comments, positive or negative regarding the Chinese made line of ham radios available here in the US?

Thank you for your time.

Now let me just say, that I see a lot of the same line of questioning regarding whether an amateur radio license would truly be needed in a crisis type situation in these forums. I've even read threads where it's been advised to just simply not worry about studying for and obtaining an amateur radio license.

I've also seen this subject creep up into conversation on amateur radio forums from time to time. I've even contemplated what I would have done as a technician or general class ham and experienced an emergency situation where the only way to reach someone else would be to transmit in the extra class portion of the band.

As someone who cares not only about what amateur radio can do as a service, I equally care about the hobby aspects of it as well and here are my comments about those questions asked in the listener email.

I too have spent some time to better think about my everyday carry items, I myself have assembled a "Get home bag" which stays in the car and I'm working on updating my go-kit or bug out bag.

Cell phones, text messaging and mobile internet access may or may not be available in a crisis situation. I think this mainly depends on the crisis. We've seen in some situations where the mobile voice network is down, but mobile text or mobile data networks are functional. This is perhaps why some favor social networks like Twitter and Facebook as being a form of communications to family and friends and just staying in the loop on what is happening.

Between citizens band, the family radio service and amateur radio.....Amateur Radio provides the greatest flexibility. But of course, that greater flexibility does come with a learning curve and the requirement of obtaining a license to legally transmit.

At least in the US, anyone....licensed or not may purchase amateur radio equipment. Before I had my license, I had purchased both my Yaesu VX-6 hand held and my Yaesu FT-897 HF rig. As I just stated, transmitting does require a license.

Regarding the question about if in a crisis situation would you still need a license to legally transmit. I'm not a lawyer and I didn't sleep in a holiday inn express last night....but the law is the law. What is lawful or unlawful today, does not change just because there is a crisis taking place. The FCC is not going to change their rules just because a crisis is taking place.

In my opinion the issue at hand is bigger than "is it legal or illegal". I see it more like this. If a person recognizes that amateur radio is the better communications solution in a crisis situation and they don't pursue obtaining a license to legally operate the equipment BEFORE the crisis occurs....then what bloody good does having the radio do, after the stuff has hit the fan?

Now I'm also not saying the licensing process teaches you everything you need to know either. As I've stated before, the licensing process just simply prepares you and the license is more of a license to learn.

So my advice to anyone who recognizes the importance of amateur radio in filling a communications gap in a crisis situation, please pursue the exam and license process. Then join a club and use the equipment as a hobby, join an emergency communications group and practice and continue to learn. It is by doing these things all legally, where you'll really gain the understanding you will need to operate the equipment in an emergency situation.

Finally, regarding any positive or negative comments I might have towards the line of Chinese made radios available both in the US and around the world. Personally....I don't own either the O'Shane or Baio Feng hand held radios. I have friends who have purchased, I've watched several youtube videos about these and read several blog postings on the subject.

I'll admit that I just recently learned how to pronounce both of these companies names....at least I think so.

Of course, one of the topics being discussed on forums, YouTube and blogs is the cost for these radios. If you shop around you'll find these available for around \$50.00 and up. My friend Stephen Adams, K4STA who I've mentioned on the podcast before, offers the Baio Feng UV-5R both in his on-line store for \$49.99. Stephen has both an eBay store and a non-eBay store...I'll post links to both in the show notes if you are interested in checking that out.

<http://stores.ebay.com/kacomunicatons>

<http://kacomunications.net/zencart/>

As for my opinion....I guess I really don't have one. It would be unfair of me to state one way or the other since I've only ever held one in my hand one time and during that time I was just really looking at the exterior of the unit.

What I can tell you is these units are selling. While I have heard that programming these can be somewhat of a challenge (compared to iCOM, Kenwood and Yaesu models). I do know our friends at RTSystems offer software and cables for some of the O'Shane models. While they currently do not offer support for the Baio Feng models...that could always change.

For the price... These could be a good starter radio for a new ham. I've known of many brand new hams who rushed out to spend what little money they could save on a single-band hand-held as it was all they could afford at the time. They quickly grew bored with only having access to the 2m band. So from that perspective...I say these could be great first time radios.

I also know of many other hams who have purchased these just from the perspective that if something happened....meaning it gets dropped, lost, stolen etc. The investment they are out is minimal compared to other hand held radios.

Now a few weeks ago I posted a new poll question on MyAmateurRadio.com asking the simple question....Are you a prepper? The possible voting options are Yes, I'm prepping. No, I'm not prepping. And finally, What's a Prepper?

As I've stated before, I post these poll questions or survey questions to gain a better understanding of what YOU the listener is doing in the hobby of amateur radio. From time to time it may appear the poll question doesn't directly relate to amateur radio. In the case of the "Are you a Prepper?" question...I suppose it does and it doesn't. But it's not really far off topic.

I mentioned earlier that I've been spending some time reading various forums and websites devoted to prepping....that is, preparing for anything from a 72 hour power outage all the way to the unthinkable. Many of these sites will have a communications section and amateur radio is very highly regarded as the best form of communication for whatever may happen. Additionally, I'm seeing many licensed hams participating in these forums and websites.

If we step away from the radio communications aspect of prepping for just a minute, It can be quite a daunting task of putting together the sort of supplies we and our families will need to get by in either a short-term or a longer-term type of situation.

Some of the better advice that I've seen can be summed up in the following statement. "Eat what you store, store what you eat". "Eat what you store, store what you eat".

The concept is simple. This just simply means that anyone can begin putting many of the items into storage which you and your family frequently eats.

I think the misconception is that we have to buy tons and tons and even more tons of dehydrated meals. There may be nothing wrong with this concept except for the taste of some of these meals and not all of them taste like cardboard.

Actually, some of the dehydrated meals which you find in camping specialty stores (also known as backpacking food) is quite nice. When I was doing a lot more backpacking and camping I would purchase the brand Mountain House.

While some meals were better than others, I quickly learned that most of the tomato sauce based meals like spaghetti, lasagna etc. were actually pretty good. Especially after a long hike.

Again, I'm not knocking the dehydrated meals...I actually keep on-hand about a half dozen or so of the ones I enjoy. I even packed one along with me on a winter SOTA activation I did last year. These things do have a shelf life of several years and are easy to pack and store. Of course, they can also be expensive.

Back to the "Eat what you store, store what you eat" statement. Since I don't routinely eat dehydrated meals for breakfast, lunch and dinner....My wife and I are starting to fill our pantry with items such as canned soup, canned meat, dry items such as rice, pasta noodles etc. Sometimes we are fairly predictable with our weekly meal planning and will have the same meals on a weekly basis for several weeks in a row. An example is at least once a week we have a pasta type dish.

So we are buying those items. Each week we try to buy a little bit more of these types of things.

Now this accomplishes a couple of different things. If you are on a budget, it does allow for you to shop for certain things when they are on sale, or when you have coupons. You don't have to go out and buy three months worth of groceries in one go. Build up....get a week or two, then before you know it you'll have a months worth. Then two, then three....

Then instead of going to the grocery store when I need a bottle of ketchup or need more coffee. I go down to my basement pantry and get it from there. Then when coffee is back on sale, I buy to re-stock my shelf.

Think of it as your own convenience store.

Now I do apologize that I've rambled on for so long about this. Again, I know there are many different scenarios that some people prep for. What is right for you and your family....well only you can decide that.

In closing, ABSOLUTELY YES...amateur radio (in my opinion) is the better alternative to other forms of communications in a crisis and disaster situation. Amateur Radio is also a wonderful hobby and it can and has opened career doors for so many.

My advice for those who are considering the addition of amateur radio to their overall preparedness plan....study for, get your license, get a radio, join a club, learn how to use your radio and most importantly....USE THE RADIO. Be active in the hobby and service of amateur radio. There really is no substitute.

Good luck.

### **Featured Website Segment**

Our featured website for episode 57 is the website and home of the annual Colorado 14er Amateur Radio Event. Visit [14er.org](http://14er.org), that's 14 er dot org. Each year.... VHF, UHF and HF signals radiate from the top of the world....well at least the top of the world in Colorado to stations all over the state, all over North America and beyond.

Started in 1991 by Bob Witte, K0NR....the event has primarily focused on the 54 official Colorado 14'ers or 14,000 foot peaks. This year, the annual event combines the over 1700 SOTA or Summits On The Air peaks in the state to offer a lot more flexibility in mountaintop portable operations.

The Colorado 14er Event takes place the first Sunday of August (August 5th) and I'll provide more information about the event and certainly how you can participate next week during PARP Plus 11 which will be available Monday evening.

PARP Plus 11 will cover all the special events, contests and other amateur radio gatherings taking place the week and weekend of July 31st through August 6th.

<http://www.14er.org/home>

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### **Featured Gadget Segment**

The featured gadget for this episode is an app available for iPad, but will soon be available for iPhone and iPod Touch as well as devices running the Android Operating System.

The app is called Splashtop and is currently available in the iTunes App Store for \$1.99 US. I'll post a link in the show notes for both the Apple App Store page as well as the Splashtop website.

<http://itunes.apple.com/app/id382509315>

<http://www.splashtop.com/home>

Splashtop allows you to access your computer from a mobile device. Again, available now for iPad with other iOS device and Android OS devices coming soon.

The app runs on your device and there is a small client which will need to be installed on your PC or Mac. Registering for an account is absolutely free and using the service across your wireless network does not require any monthly plan. However, their Anywhere access plans are either .99 cents per month or 9.99 annually.

Why am I telling you about this? In addition to having access to all the programs running on your PC or Mac, you also have access to some of those amateur radio programs.

I've been using the Splashtop app on my iPad to control the JT65-HF program from inside my home or while in the courtyard.

There are other remote control type apps that will do a similar job to Splashtop, the actual setup for Splashtop was simply and fast. Again, just register for a free account on the Splashtop website.



Download and install the free client for Mac or PC and purchase and install the Splashtop app for the iPad.

The only configuration change I needed to make was on my PC client to uncheck the box for sending audio to the remote device. That's it.

The Splashtop app provides direct touch-screen functionality to the JT65-HF application and to anything else running on my PC.

Now for the fine print and I suppose word of caution. There are many hams who have sophisticated and some not so sophisticated remote control setups in their ham shack. These setups allow them to access their ham station from anywhere on the planet, control their radios, tune their antennas, rotate their antennas and in some cases they are able to completely shut down their station and with failsafe measures in place should something go wrong.

For me and my small ham shack and soon to be new ham shack....well I just don't have those things in place. While I can turn on and off the FT-950 via Ham Radio Deluxe, I can't do that with the 897 which I use for digital modes. So paying close attention to the JT65 screen and ensuring the rig and the software goes back into receive mode is important.

When using this setup, I'm no more than about 25 feet away from my station and the interaction with the JT65-HF client when using the JT65 mode is simple.

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### **Ham Adventures Segment**

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I think for the past several episodes of this podcast, I've started off this segment talking about what a busy month I've had. Well....July certainly proved itself as another busy month and perhaps the busiest of the year for my involvement with amateur radio and just life in general.

For those of you living vicariously through my Endeavour to finish my new ham shack, podcast studio, home office and man-cave....the work continues and many new milestones were made a long the way.

The last time I provided an update on my progress via the podcast was during episode 56 which released in June, just before Field Day. The work taking place on the new space at that time was painting. All the painting including ceiling and walls is complete.

My wife and I spent the week of Independence Day (the 4th of July for listeners outside of the US) on a staycation....or a stay at home vacation. During this time I managed to get the tile floor installed and started the trim work consisting of the door trim and baseboard trim.

The cabinets I selected arrived last week and they are beautiful. Storage is not going to be an issue in my new ham shack. I have above desk cabinets and below desk cabinets to keep all the things that tend to clutter my desktop nicely organized.

It's all coming together and with just a little over a month away from the Colorado QSO Party, my plan of working this contest from my new ham shack is really becoming a reality. When I return again to your

MP3 player in August with PARP episode 58, I hope to report a completion percentage of around 90-95%. Wish me luck....

During my staycation, my wife and I celebrated our 5th wedding anniversary. We said our "I Do's" on July 1 2007 on what I thought was one of the hottest days in the history of Colorado. Making sure we escape a repeat of our recent hot temperatures, we escaped to the mountains for the day. We had a nice day trip to Breckenridge, Colorado and took the scenic route back home. It was a great time...but of course any day I can spend with my best friend is a great day.

I also managed to get in a SOTA activation during my week of vacation. If you've ever installed a tile floor you know it can be painful on the back, legs and especially the knees. On the 3rd of July, my wife and I drove the summit of Mount Evans. Mount Evans is one of Colorado's 54 14'ers or 14,000 foot peaks. Both Mount Evans and Pikes Peak have a paved road to the top. Both Pikes Peak and Mount Evans are SOTA qualified summits and to make the activation SOTA legal, I hiked down and completed the last 100 feet of elevation gain to the summit under human power.

The activation was successful. Thanks for Bob, AJ5C for being there to chase me and help spot me so others could find me. It was a fast activation. I worked a half-dozen QSO's all while keep my eyes on the dark storm clouds starting to build across the Rockies. My wife was with me and I believe she enjoyed her first 14'er experience.

My July 3rd activation of Mount Evans is special to me in many ways. First, it was my first 14'er activation. Of course, not a lot of fan fair considering I drove to the top. But Mt. Evans had never been activated for Summits on the Air. My activation was the first.

But most important to me is the fact that Evans is the last name of my grandfather who passed away in 1988. Of course, Mount Evans was not named after my Grandfather...but having the opportunity to sort of claim that summit in his name and honor is something that means a lot to me.

### **Mailbag**

Mail goes here

Well this wraps another episode of The Practical Amateur Radio Podcast. We will return again with episode 58 sometime in August . In the mean time, want more amateur radio audio and video content? Of course, every practical amateur radio podcast from episode 1 through this episode, episode 57 are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on MyAmateurRadio.com. But don't forget about all the other wonderful amateur radio podcasts available. You'll find a list of all that I know about on MyAmateurRadio.com. Just look on the right hand side, for My Favorite Amateur Radio Podcasts. Enjoy!

\_Until next time, 73 to all from KD0BIK.

This has been The Practical Amateur Radio Podcast. The Practical Amateur Radio Podcast is written and produced by Jerry Taylor. You may contact Jerry by email at [kd0bik@arrl.net](mailto:kd0bik@arrl.net) or by visiting his website at [www.myamateurradio.com](http://www.myamateurradio.com). The practical amateur radio podcast and myamateurradio.com are protected under the Creative Commons license. Please see myamateurradio.com for details.